

2012: Season of Discovery

Even without carpets of wildflowers along the road sides, blossoms can be found if you are willing to leave your car to walk, especially in western canyons and washes.

Wildflower Update for April 11th

Rain late in March has prompted most ocotillos to leaf out, making them the stars of this season's wildflower show. The rain does not seem to have had a significant effect on annual flowers (which can be found here and there, primarily in western canyons), but many cactus have responded with new growth and an abundance of blossoms.

- Visitor Center area: the brittlebush and chuparosa are fading, but the cholla and prickly pear are joining the barrel and beavertail in putting on a display of beautiful cactus flowers. A few desert dandelions and Fiddleneck have popped up here and there, and tiny cryptantha persists as the most abundant (albeit inconspicuous) annual. The desert willow has put on some of its lavender orchid-like flowers, and the palo verde trees should be bursting with yellow soon.
- Borrego Palm Canyon: Shrubs are still blooming, along with scattered annuals in sandy areas. Carrying water is a must as the weather heats up. Bighorn sheep need water too, of course, and have been seen at the stream by at least a few people on most recent days.
- Blair Valley: goldfields are blooming on the lake bed. Other annuals (in small quantities) can be found on the Morteros and Pictographs Trails, including phacelia, penstemon, and fishhook cactus.
- Plum Canyon: Two-wheel drive vehicles should stay right at the fork. Shrubs are blooming, including chuparosa, brittlebush, desert lavender, and agave, along with some annuals—desert star, monkeyflower, little gold poppy, chia and fiddleneck. Here, as elsewhere, flower seekers need to get out of their cars and

look around in order to find them. Blooming ocotillo can be found along Highway 78 as you head east toward Ocotillo Wells.

- Mine Wash: another road accessible to two-wheel drive vehicles (do not go past the Indian Village site). Look for ocotillo and agave in bloom; annuals will require more hunting. Follow the short trail and explore the milling features here.
- Higher Elevations: many flowers can be seen along the stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) between Barrel Springs and Warner Springs. Pick up the trail near the PCT marker near milepost 1.0 on highway S-22, east of Ranchita. Drivers of four-wheel-drive vehicles can see plenty of goldfields along the Jasper Trail and Grapevine Canyon roads.